CAVSE SHALL NOT FAIL

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TWO ORDEALS OF DEMOCRACY

A LECTURE AT MILTON ACADEMY
ON THE
ALUMNI WAR MEMORIAL FOUNDATION
OCTOBER 16, 1924

TWO ORDEALS OF DEMOCRACY

BY

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PREFACE

The Alumni War Memorial Foundation at Milton Academy has been established as the basis of a living and growing memorial of men who gave their lives for a great ideal. It provides for teaching and lecturing, by men of preëminent ability and attainment in the service of great causes, on various aspects of the responsibilities and opportunities attaching to leadership in a democracy. Its spirit is interpreted by the sculptured medallion on the tablet in the School Chapel, which shows a relay rider seizing a flaming torch from the uplifted hand of a fallen comrade, and the legend 'The Cause Shall Not Fail.'

Colonel Buchan came to Milton to lecture upon this Foundation in October, 1924. His acceptance of the appointment was made peculiarly welcome by his long-mani-

fested interest in this kind of memorial, and by the fact that his great tribute to 'the Offering of Youth,' the concluding paragraph of his 'History of the Great War,' had been reprinted by permission in the programme of the service of dedication, a year previously, as a perfect expression of the mood of that occasion. He has traced through 'Two Ordeals of Democracy' the patient, lonely fortitude of leadership that determines and holds its course, and the vital principle of coördinated effort whose value mankind is learning slowly, at terrible cost, and still far too readily forgets.

W. L. W. FIELD

Milton Academy

December, 1924

TWO ORDEALS OF DEMOCRACY

I COUNT it a high privilege to be with you here to-day. You are permitting me to share in the commemoration of your dead, and by so doing you are treating a stranger as a kinsman. A memorial such as yours must be more than a mere record of a gallant adventure and a costly sacrifice. It is there before the eyes of the generations as a perpetual reminder of a path which to some degree every young man can travel, the path of duty and courage and devotion; and it is a reminder, too, that history is a continuous thing—that past, present, and future are in a true sense indivisible, that we enter upon a heritage bequeathed by others, and that in our turn we hand on a potent legacy to those who follow after.

I am honoured, deeply honoured, by

your invitation, and I can best show my sense of that honour by claiming the right of an intimate friend and speaking to you not of my own country, but of yours. The Great War, which we are here to commemorate, made us for a time one household. I propose to exercise my privilege as a member of that household by giving you an Englishman's reading of one page, perhaps the greatest page, of your national life. My object is to illustrate the continuity of history. I want you to realise how, half a century before the Great War, you in America faced most of its problems and brilliantly solved them. There was a time after your Civil War when America seemed to do her best to forget it. Old warriors met in clubs and corners to fight their battles over again, but for many years there was little popular interest in the matter. Am I wrong in partially attributing the change in this attitude to the publication

by an Englishman, Colonel Henderson, of his classic life of Stonewall Jackson? To us in Britain, and especially to British soldiers, the subject never lost its attraction, and it was well for us that, when German staff officers regarded it as a mere squabble of amateurs, and devoted their attention to their own barren campaign of 1870, our Staff College for two generations made a careful study of the battles of North and South. I cannot claim that during your ordeal my country always behaved either with sympathy or with discretion, but I can claim that we were always alive to its tremendous importance. I have an uncle still living, an old general of eighty-two, who, as a very young officer in our Life Guards, managed by some nefarious means to escape from his duties and to ride with Sheridan.

It is a habit of a great invention to supersede its predecessors, and only the anti-

quary concerns himself now with the first embryonic steam-engine or the clumsy early flying-machines. In the same way, the war which ended six years ago may be said to have superseded, so far as military interest goes, the campaigns of the nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries. But there is one exception. It cannot supersede your own Civil War, for in that four years' struggle, as I see it, all the main strategic and tactical developments of the Great War were foreshadowed. Its scale may have been small, but we must not confuse scale with kind, and its quality was transcendent. Moreover, it was a conflict of great men, leaders on the heroic scale. Again, it was a clash of honest ideals —half-truths, or otherwise there would have been no clash, but ideals, each in itself reasonable, and each forming the highest allegiance for those who have been brought up under a particular kind of tradi-

tion. Again, because each side stood for no mean cause, it was one of the cleanest and most chivalrous, as well as one of the most heroic, campaigns ever fought. Finally, for the lover of romance and the student of human nature I do not know where you will find a richer harvest. It was singularly free from military formalism, and its story is a succession of strange and curious pictures:—Jeb Stuart and his men flitting like ghosts through the forests with their hats garlanded with flowers; the charge at Chattanooga silhouetted against the harvest moon; Leonidas Polk, the last of the warrior bishops, baptising on the eve of battle his fellow generals in a mess tent out of a tin dish by the light of a tallow candle; the eve of Chancellorsville, when in the quiet twilight the rush of birds and deer from the woods first told the Northern army that Jackson was on their rear.

I

He would be a bold man who would set down glibly in a sentence or two the cause of the Great War. The proximate causes are clear enough — the nervousness of Austria, the ambition of Germany — but for the true and ultimate cause you must dig deep into the history of the last century. It was the same with your Civil War, as it has been the same with all wars. The proximate cause was slavery, but the roots of strife lay deeper. The truth is that in America before 1862 there were two societies not yet integrated. Both North and South would have subscribed to the general principles of what we call a 'democratic' creed: representative government, the rule of the majority, and so forth. Both accepted the Constitution of the United States, but in reading that Constitution each put the emphasis differently. To the South the vital thing, the thing with which all its

affections and sentiments were intertwined, was the State. The North, on the other hand, had for its main conception the larger civic organism, the Nation. Hence, if a difference of opinion arose between a State or a group of States and the rest, the Southerner would think naturally of secession; under secession the sacrosanctity of the State, the civic unit about which he cared, remained intact. To the Northerner the secession of a State or States, seemed treason to that larger unit, the Nation, to which his loyalty was owed. There, roughly, you get a very real difference of outlook, due to all kinds of historic and social causes. But it was a difference of emphasis rather than of principle, and I think it might fairly be said that each represented a half-truth. There is no real inconsistency between a sovereign Nation and a self-contained and locally autonomous State. In 1862 the wisest Southerners, if pressed, would have

agreed on the importance of the National conception, and the wisest Northerners on the necessity of preserving a vigorous individual State life.

But now came in the question of slavery, with which were involved all kinds of economic interests which cloud a man's reason. The wisest Southerners disliked the system and looked forward to its gradual disappearance, and the wisest Northerners had no desire to abolish slavery there and then and fling the South into bankruptcy. But since the matter touched the livelihood of many, passions were excited, and on both sides intolerance increased, so that presently what was merely a question of policy became a dogma, and this dogma grew more arrogant as the argument progressed. So very soon we find the sovereignty of the State being exalted in the South as the first object of the citizens' loyalty. From this the right to secede logically

followed, and on that the issue was joined.

We can see the stages in the growth of the dispute in the career of Lincoln. Long before he was President he had been a vigorous opponent of slavery, but he was very unlike the extremer abolitionists, and on the question of slavery alone he would not have entered into the war. He fought first and last for the integrity of the Nation. You remember his famous letter to Horace Greeley in which he wrote: 'I would save the Union. I would save it the shortest way under the Constitution. . . . If I could save the Union without freeing any slaves, I would do it; and if I could save it by freeing all the slaves, I would do it; and if I could save it by freeing some and leaving others alone, I would do that.' But Lincoln also saw that slavery would force on war by exacerbating men's feelings, and might drive them to transform a difference of emphasis into a difference of principle.

When, on February 11, 1861, he left his home for Washington to become President of the United States, after borrowing money —for he was very poor—to pay the expenses of his early months at the White House, he had one of the most difficult decisions to make that ever fell to the lot of mortal man. He had to decide at once, for Fort Sumter was besieged. If he reinforced or provisioned it, war with the South would follow; if he left it alone he surrendered tamely a piece of national property of which he was the trustee, and assented on behalf of the American nation to the dictatorship of a section. Let us examine these difficulties, for only thus can we get the measure of the greatness of the man.

He was a President elected by a minority vote. It is certain that there was no majority in his favour in the United States, and it is by no means certain that there was a clear majority for him even in his

own party. He was a country lawyer with little experience of men and cities, self-educated, uncouth in manner and appearance, utterly unfamiliar with the details of government. No one of the members of his Cabinet but considered himself far his superior in ability, and most lost no opportunity of making this plain to him in public and private. He was the most pacific of men, tender-hearted to a fault, and from the Indian campaign of his youth he had learned a deep horror of war. The war which he was contemplating was the most terrible of all struggles—a strife between kinsmen. For what was he going to fight? For Democracy? But the Southerners were democrats and were using his own phrases against him. They declared that they fought for the free development of their own specialised society against outside dictation. It was very easy to turn the ordinary democratic shibboleths in fa-

vour of secession. He had no army to speak of, and the best soldiers had cast in their lot with the South. General Scott, the Northern commander, had given it as his opinion that Fort Sumter should be evacuated and 'the wayward sisters allowed to go in peace.' The Northern abolitionists told him that he could never raise an army. Wendell Phillips declared, 'You cannot go through Massachusetts and recruit men to bombard Charleston or New Orleans.' Remember Lincoln was no fire-eater. He was exceedingly cautious and diplomatic, as was shown in all his electioneering campaigns and in the way in which he angled for the allegiance of the Border States, declaring that 'he hoped to have the Almighty on his side, but he must have Kentucky.' But no diplomacy availed him now. He had to decide yes or no, and yes meant inevitably war.

What could he hope to win by war? A

hundred years before, Chatham had said: 'Conquer a free population of three million souls? The thing is impossible,' and the phrase had become an axiom in politics. If war came he would be confronted with five and a half million people in deadly earnest, with three and a half million slaves behind them to grow food while the men took the field. Could even victory, the most sweeping victory, bring these men back into the national fold? The difficulties were so deeply felt by his colleagues that we find Seward, his Secretary of State, proposing seriously to relinquish Fort Sumter, to attempt to get slavery out of the question altogether, and to try to fake up a quarrel with Spain and France over Mexico, in order to unite the nation. To such casuistry Lincoln replied that the issue before him was union or disunion and that Fort Sumter lay at the heart of it. But the incident showed how deep was the confu-

sion into which even brave, clear-headed, and public-spirited men had fallen. Lincoln, in deciding, had to stand alone.

He decided for war, and I think that decision one of the most courageous acts in all history. He had no illusions about the coming conflict. He believed that it would be a long war and a bloody war, and he saw no light at the end of it. But, with that noble fatalism which is a source of weakness in fools but of inspiration in the great, he felt that God had mysteriously guided his steps to this desperate brink, and that the leap was ordained of Heaven. In his slow, patient way he reasoned it out and could reach but the one conclusion. He fought for the Nation and the integrity of the historic state, the sacrosanctity of the work of the great men who had built it in the past. He believed that such a fabric is a trust which men weaken to their own undoing. If we look for Lincoln's creed in its sim-

plest form, we shall find it in a private conversation at that time recorded by John Hay. 'For my own part,' he said, 'I consider the central idea prevailing in this struggle is the necessity upon us of proving that popular government is not an absurdity. We must settle this question now, whether, in a free government, the minority have the right to break up the government whenever they choose. If we fail, it will go far to prove the incapability of the people to govern themselves.' Lincoln fought to prevent Democracy making a fool of itself, and if that noble, but most brittle type of polity is to be preserved to the world, we have not done with the fight. To most of his colleagues it seemed a mere debating issue, an absurdly narrow ground on which to plunge the nation into war; but I am inclined to think that every great decision in history has been taken on a fine point. The foothold may

be narrow, but if it be of granite it will suffice.

I pause, gentlemen, to remind you, if you will permit me, that in the great crises of life every man must stand alone, as much alone as at the moment of death. No friend or wife, no parent or child, can share that austere responsibility. The controversy is within his own soul, or, to put it in the language of theology, it is between himself and his Maker. His only consultant must be the valour of his heart. It is so in the history of war, from the day when Cæsar crossed the little stream called the Rubicon, which the Roman constitution forbade the Pro-Consul of Gaul to pass, to that day in September, 1918, when Sir Douglas Haig decided to play the great game, and, in spite of the doubts of his colleagues and the hesitation of his own Government, flung his armies against the Hindenburg Line and went through it

as through blotting-paper. Generals and statesmen are called upon to make those tremendous decisions, and according to the result they are judged by the tribunal of history. But, as you advance in life, no one of you will escape the same necessity, though your decisions may not affect the fate of empires. You will all be called upon some day to face situations in public or private life where you have to choose between two ways—the right and the wrong, the hard road and the easy, the long game and the short game — and you will have to choose alone. You will find plenty of excellent arguments for the second best, for slackness, for shirking, but if you are wise you will be chary of listening to these soft and facile monitors. For, though peace and quiet are good things to be earnestly pursued, the best kind of peace and quiet is that which reigns in a man's soul.

II

GREAT enterprises fall into two parts — the preliminary spiritual conflict, and the task of translating spirit into matter — or, to put it in the words traditionally ascribed to Cromwell, first the trust in God and then the laborious job of keeping your powder dry. We have seen how Lincoln achieved the first; let us now consider how he faced the second. If the war was not to be fought in vain he must win a complete and final victory, for no drawn battle could suffice. Now, the North began with all the advantages but two. She had a population of twenty-two millions against nine. She had the great industries, the mineral fields, the shipbuilding yards. She had all the navy there was. She had far greater wealth, and was not only far more self-supporting, but owing to her ships she could import what she did not produce from overseas. She had all the rank and file of the regular army and

four fifths of the officers. The South, on the other hand, had few industries and few ships. She was mainly agricultural, a land of vast estates worked by negro slaves. She was poor in the sense that if driven back upon herself she had within her borders only a limited number of the necessaries of life and war. But the South had two advantages which made her triumphant in the first stages and at one moment nearly gave her the victory. The first was that her aristocratic squirearchy was better fitted for a military organisation than the Northern democracy. The great majority of her citizens were country folk who could march and shoot, and she was a nation of horsemen and horse-masters. Obviously, such a people, if armies have to be improvised, have less to learn than men who come from a different kind of environment. The advantage is, of course, terminable; it is very real at the start, but it lessens as the

enemy begins to learn his job. In the second place it was the fortune of the South to have fighting on her side by far the abler generals. Lee and Stonewall Jackson have had few superiors in the art of war. The North produced many competent soldiers — Grant, Thomas, Sherman, Sheridan, Schofield — but no one of them reaches the small and select brotherhood of the greatest captains. On the other hand, if, taking the whole of history, you limit that brotherhood to no more than six names, you must include Lee.

Now, wars are won by superior strength — by weight of numbers, if the numbers are properly trained and supplied. Military history shows no real exception to this maxim. A splendid genius or some extraordinary initial advantage may give to the weaker side an immediate victory, which paralyses and disintegrates the enemy; but if the enemy refuses to be

paralysed, if he insists on fighting on, if he develops a stubborn defensive, if he learns his lessons, and if he has greater resources than his antagonist, in the end he will win. Against material preponderance, if it be wisely handled, the most wonderful generalship will beat ineffectual wings. Hannibal, in the long run, was worn down by the much inferior Scipio. Napoleon fell before the accumulated weight of the Allies. But—and it is a vital proviso —the nation which is strongest in material and human resources must learn how to use them. Until it learns to use them it will go on being beaten. The problem of the North was exactly the problem of the Allies in 1914. She had to assemble her greater man-power. She had to train it. She had to find a commander-in-chief who could use it reasonably well. She had to discover how her greater wealth could be best applied to cripple her adversary. It

took her four years to learn these things, and when she had learned them she won.

Lincoln, as a war minister, had everything to learn. He had no natural aptitude for the post except an iron courage, but he had that complete intellectual honesty which can look clearly at facts, even unwelcome facts. Let us see how he faced his problem.

I. His first business was to raise the men. He had about 18,000 regulars, most of them serving on the Western frontier, and he had four fifths of the regular officers. A good many of these officers had had experiences in the Mexican War fourteen years before. The President showed how little he appreciated the nature of the coming conflict by asking for only 75,000 volunteers, and these to serve for only three months. Then came the first engagement at Bull Run, which opened his eyes. He was empowered by Congress to raise

500,000 volunteers for three years' service, and a little later the number was increased to 1,000,000. Recruits came in magnificently. If we remember the population of the North I think we must rank the effort as among the most remarkable ever made by a system of volunteer enlistment. Lincoln began by asking for 600,000, and he got 700,000. After Fredericksburg he asked for 300,000, and he got 430,000. Then he asked for another 300,000, of which each State should provide its quota; but he only got 87,000, a little more than a quarter of his demands. Meantime the South for many months had adopted conscription. It was now a year and a half since the first battle, and the campaign had entered on that period of drag which was the time of blackest depression in the North.

Then Lincoln took the decisive step. The North was, I suppose, of all parts of

the world at the moment that in which the idea of individual liberty was most deeply implanted. She was a country which had always gloried in being unmilitary, in contra-distinction to the effete monarchies of Europe. The Constitution had been so framed as to be extraordinarily tender to individual rights. The press was unbridled, and the press was very powerful. The land, too, was full of philosophic idealists who preferred dogmas to facts, and were vocal in the papers and on the platforms. Moreover, there was a general election coming on, and since the war had gone badly there was a good chance that Lincoln might be defeated if he in any way added to his unpopularity. There were not wanting men — some of them very able and distinguished men — who declared that it was far better to lose the war than to win it by transgressing one article of the current political faith. There were others, Lincoln's

own friends and advisers, who warned him solemnly that no hint of compulsion would ever be tolerated by free-born Americans, and that if he dared to propose the thing he would have an internal revolution to add to his other troubles. Again and again he was told that the true friends of the enemy were the compulsionists, an argument we were very familiar with in England nine years ago. You must remember, too, that Lincoln was in the fullest sense of the word a democratic statesman, believing that government must not only be *for* the people but *by* the people. When he was faced by the necessity of finding some other way of raising men than as volunteers, he was faced with the task of jettisoning — I will not say the principles, for principles are tougher things — but all the sentiments and traditions of his political life.

But Lincoln was a very great man, and

he believed that it was the business of a statesman to lead the people — to act, to initiate policy, and not to wait like a dumb lackey in the ante-chamber of his masters. He knew that politics were not an abstract dogma, but a working code based upon facts. He knew also that in a crisis it is wisest to grasp the nettle. He saw the magnitude of the crisis, that it was a question of life or death, whatever journalists and demagogues might say. So on March 3, 1863, a law was passed to raise armies by conscription. He answered those who met him with the famous 'thin-edge-of-the-wedge' argument in words that should be remembered: that 'he did not believe that a man could contract so strong a taste for emetics during a temporary illness as to insist upon feeding upon them during the remainder of a healthy life.' At the start there was some resistance, but in a little the good sense of the country prevailed.

It was one of the two greatest acts of Lincoln's life, and, like all great acts of courage, it had its reward. Four months later Gettysburg was fought, Vicksburg surrendered to Grant, and the tide turned. The North recruited from first to last some three millions out of a population of twenty millions. The men had been found, the human resources of the North were fully mobilised, and two years after the passing of the act came that April day when Lee surrendered to Grant at Appomattox.

II. We come now to the second problem. Mere numbers are not enough unless they are trained and disciplined for war. The North drew by far the greater part of her armies from men who had been engaged in civil life. Let us see how she shaped them.

The armies of both North and South were amateurs, with a small sprinkling of trained officers. I have said that numbers

always win, but they must be disciplined numbers. Hordes, however large, will generally be beaten. The North began her campaign with a theory which is very common in popularly governed nations which have had no military experience. She was against all hard-and-fast discipline. The men should serve willingly, because the orders appealed to their intelligence and not because they were given by a commanding officer. The argument ran something like this: 'An order understood and willingly obeyed is far better than an order blindly complied with. Officers must therefore carry their men with them, persuade them, humour them, so that all ranks may have the enthusiasm of willing service. Only thus can you have a democratic army.'

On this one may remark that the result might be democratic, but it could not possibly be an army. And I do not think it was democratic either, if we understand

democracy aright. Democracy as the most living and organic form of government should be also the most elastic, and the most able to adapt itself to the unforeseen facts of the situation. This does not mean that you are to establish a cut-and-dried military hierarchy and to govern only by fear. If any of you have ever marched in peace time with French infantry, such as the Chausseurs Alpins, you probably have been amazed, as I have been, at what seemed the lack of discipline. The men chaffed their officers and addressed them by nicknames, and at night you could see an officer and a private playing chess together outside the café door. Yes, but in time of war that was all changed. The men and officers were still the best of friends, but there was a rigid discipline, the more rigid in as much as it came from below. It was the will of the men themselves, who recognised wherein lay victory

and security. I call that army a democratic army. I called the Allied Armies, as we knew them six years ago, democratic armies. But the forces of the North during the first stages of the Civil War were neither democratic nor an army.

It took a long time to drive out of men's heads the idea that an order was only to be obeyed when it commended itself to the private soldier's mind. At first officers were elected by the votes of the rank and file, and a very mixed lot they were. For one good man produced in this way there were twenty plausible incompetents. The bonds of discipline were loose, and, though the world has never seen more patriotic and intelligent troops, patriotism and intelligence alone were not enough. The result of the Northern system was that many vices developed which made them an easy prey to Lee and Jackson. An undisciplined army lacks mobility, and so Jackson could

do what he pleased with Pope and Hooker. A lack of discipline means straggling, and no Northern general could be certain how much of his force would turn up at a given place at a given time. Moreover, outpost duties were scamped, and the result was a series of costly surprises. In the battle itself fire discipline was bad, and half the strength was expended in the air. There was the same lack of order all through the army. If a brigadier thought himself slighted, he posted off to Washington to intrigue in Congress, and instead of being tried by court martial and shot as a deserter he was more often than not promoted.

But the North learned the lesson, though the learning was bitter. If you will study that admirable compilation 'The Battles and Leaders of the Civil War,' you will see how the best American officers faced the task of securing the highest discipline without impairing enthusiasm or crushing indi-

vidual intelligence. The time came at last when Lincoln found the right Commander-in-Chief and gave him his undivided trust. Grant was not the man to stand insubordination, and he produced the kind of instrument that was needed. Never has a human instrument been more cruelly tried. The desperate losses in the Wilderness of Virginia would have broken the heart of most armies; they would have utterly destroyed the original armies of the first months of war. But the weapon had been forged and tempered and it did not break. The North had grasped the nature of her problems. She had not only assembled her man power but she had trained it, and both numbers and training were essential to victory.

III. We come now to the third problem. The North found the men; after many months she found out the way to train them; she had also to find the right kind of leadership. Strength, even disciplined strength, is not enough.

Lincoln, as I have said, began the war without any kind of aptitude or experience. His Cabinet was in the same position. It contained three able men — Seward, Chase, and Stanton — and of these the ablest, Stanton, did his best at first to make it impossible for the President to continue in office. Unfortunately, the North had no generals of such commanding and proven ability that they could be blindly trusted. Besides, the President of the United States is the chief executive officer of the country, and Lincoln, whether he wanted it or not, had to assume the direction of the war.

We sometimes talk lightly as if the only thing in war was to find a good general and give him a free hand. But in a modern war, in which the existence of the nation is at stake, the matter is not nearly so simple. To beat the enemy you have not only to win field victories; or, rather, to win the right kind of field victory you

must do more than turn out good troops and able generals. You have to use the whole national strength, military, naval, and economic, and therefore, unless the great soldier is also a great statesman like Napoleon, the supreme direction of a campaign must lie in the hands of a civilian Cabinet. That is to say, the Cabinet decides upon the main strategic plan, which involves all kinds of questions of policy, and, having so decided, it chooses the best men it can find to carry out the military and naval parts. Once these commanders have been chosen, they should not be interfered with. Until they have failed, they should be trusted.

Now, to discover and apply a continuous strategic policy you need a Cabinet loyal within itself, and it must be instructed by the best expert advice that can be secured. Lincoln had a Cabinet which, to begin with at least, was indifferently loyal. Its members all wanted to beat the South, but they

all thought that they could do the job better than the President. That was bad enough, but in addition there was Congress, which possessed an amazing number of advertising mountebanks who did their best to hamper the Government. You remember Artemus Ward's comment on them. He observed that at the last election he had deliberately voted for Henry Clay. It was true, he said, that Henry was dead, but since all the politicians that he knew were fifteenth-rate he preferred to vote for a first-class corpse. Then there was the press, which was quite uncensored and of which a large part spent its time in futile criticism of generals and statesmen and in insisting upon policies which would have given the enemy a speedy and complete victory. It was always trying to make journalistic reputations for generals and so foist them upon the Government. But, worst of all, there was no expert body to

advise the Cabinet. There was no General Staff at Washington. The capable soldiers were all in the field. There had never been any real staff in peace time, and it was impossible to improvise one rapidly in war. Hence Lincoln had to conduct the campaign himself, with little assistance from his colleagues, with no help from Congress, — very much the other way, — with no real military experts at his elbow, and under a perpetual cross-fire of newspaper criticism.

The result might have been foreseen. The first Northern generals were appointed largely because of political and journalistic clamour; indeed it is difficult to see how they could have been appointed in any other way, for there were no real formed reputations; the good men had still to discover themselves. General after general failed and was recalled. Transient and protesting phantoms, they flit over the page of history. There was one man of real

ability, McClellan, whose difficulties and achievements have not, I think, received full justice. There were competent soldiers like Meade; there were others, unfortunate or incompetent, like Burnside and Hooker and Pope and Banks. Lee used to complain in his gentle way that the North always dismissed its generals just as he was getting to know and like them. They usually began with flamboyant proclamations about how they were going to whip the Rebels in a month, and then they were hunted from pillar to post by Lee and Jackson. Pope, for example, announced when he took command that his headquarters would be in the saddle; on which some one observed drily that that would be a more proper place for his hindquarters. The chief army of the North, the Army of the Potomac, was commanded by no less than six generals, and all but one were dismissed for failure. But while these honest people were degraded, all

kinds of incompetents who had strong political interest were retained in their commands. Many of the Northern generals had one leg in camp and the other in Congress. It reminds one of those armies of seventeenth-century Scotland which were directed by the General Assembly and were soundly beaten by Montrose.

Lincoln showed his greatness by living through this awful period and not losing his courage. Gradually he brought Congress to heel. Gradually he dominated his colleagues. Gradually he purged the army of political influence. Above all, as the war advanced, he made a zealous search for military capacity. He has been much blamed for interfering with his generals during the earlier campaigns, and the charge is just; but he was in an almost hopeless position. He had the howling politicians behind him and before him commanders who showed no real grasp of the

situation; he conceived it his duty to interfere, and he interfered often foolishly, for he was still learning his job. But by and by he discovered the true soldiers, — men who had fought their way up by sheer ability, — men like Hancock and Thomas, Sherman and Sheridan. Above all, he discovered Grant.

There can be few romances in military history more striking than the rise of Grant. At the beginning the North had cried out for brilliant generals, people who made fine speeches, people who could be hailed as 'young Napoleons.' But the Napoleons and the silver-tongues vanished into obscurity, and the North found its salvation in a rough little homely man from the West, who had done well in the Mexican War, but had failed since in every business he had undertaken and had become a by-word in his family for unsuccess. He never spoke an unnecessary word. He was uncouth in manner, untidy in per-

son, and unprepossessing in appearance, but he was a true leader of men. There were rumours about his habits, and the Pharisees of the North cried out against appointing a drunkard to command the army, declaring that no blessing could go with such a man. Lincoln, you remember, replied by asking what was Grant's favourite brand of whiskey that he might send a cask of it to his other generals. I do not think that Grant stands in the very front rank of the world's soldiers, but he was the man for the task before him. He had iron nerve, iron patience, and an iron grip of the fundamentals of the case. Lincoln interfered with the earlier commanders but he did not interfere with Grant. He knew a man when he saw him.

IV. Grant was the man for the task because he could apply the strategic scheme which the situation required. What was that scheme? In its elements it was very sim-

ple, and in substance it was the same as that of the Allies in the Great War. The Southern States formed a rough quadrilateral bounded by the Potomac, the Mississippi, and the sea. One great Confederate State, Texas, lay west of the Mississippi, and Northwest Virginia ran up in a long peninsula towards Lake Erie, so that it left an isthmus only one hundred miles wide between the two parts of the North. The first thing was to occupy and hold Northwest Virginia, which was done with little trouble. The next was to blockade all the seacoast and prevent over-sea imports from reaching the South. The next was to control the Mississippi line and so not only cut off Texas from the Confederacy, but complete the investment of the quadrilateral. After that the sides of the quadrilateral could be pushed in so that the armies of Lee would be left with less and less ground for manœuvre and supply.

The North was perfectly conscious from the first of where her strength lay and what must be the main lines of her strategy. Strategy depends upon geography, and geographical facts cannot be blinked. But in the use of her strength she fumbled for many long days. Strength in war, remember, is not a thing which can be said to exist in the abstract. There may be a potentiality of strength, but till the strength is made actual it is no better than weakness. A country may have an enormous population, but unless that population appears in the shape of trained armies in the right place it is not an element of strength. It may have great wealth, but unless that wealth is used skilfully for the purposes of war it is not strength. The North had the potentiality of strength but she had to find out how to use it.

One part of the problem was successfully faced from the first. The navy was

well handled, and the whole coastline of the South was rigorously blockaded. That must be set down to the credit of the civilians at Washington. Lincoln broke away from many of the accepted practices of international law, and he and the Supreme Court created precedents which were of great use to the Allies in the late War. The result was that the South was pinched from the first and very soon began to starve. Prices went up to a crazy height. Before the end of the war, coffee sold at forty dollars a pound, and tea at thirty dollars. You could not dine in an hotel under twenty dollars, a newspaper cost a dollar, a pair of boots cost two hundred dollars. Moreover, nearly all the materials of war came from abroad, and if it had not been that the arsenals of the South were well supplied at the start and that great quantities of munitions were captured from the North in the first victories, Lee must very soon have come to

a standstill through sheer lack of material. That part of the Northern strength was well applied.

But it was not enough. The South had to be beaten in the field, and it was there that the North fumbled. The main strategic objective was clear, but it is one thing to have a clear strategical objective and quite another to have a clear strategical plan. The two objects to be aimed at were (1) the capture of Richmond, the Southern capital, and (2), as a preliminary, the mastery of the Mississippi Valley. The Northern generals, McClellan and the rest, began with brilliant and ingenious plans for the capture of Richmond, but they were too ingenious, for they dissipated their strength. Five times great armies crossed the Potomac, and five times they were driven back by half their numbers. In 1862 four armies invaded Virginia and converged on Richmond; in three months

Lee had routed them all. On at least two occasions the North was very near patching up an inconclusive peace. It is true that Lee was a man of genius and the fear of his name was worth an army corps, but over-elaborate tactics, which do not use adequately the strength of a people, play into the hands of a man of genius. We must remember, too, that the South was operating upon interior lines and so had the chance of striking rapid blows at the widely separated Northern forces. Even after Gettysburg, when the dark days had begun, she could play that game. You remember Longstreet's swift dash to the West which gave him the victory of Chickamauga and stopped the Federal invasion of Georgia.

A great strategical plan is always simple. Take Moltke's scheme which won the war of 1870; take Foch's strategy between July and November, 1918. But the North began by flinging away her chances by diver-

gent operations and divided counsels. Then came Grant's capture of Vicksburg, which, along with Admiral Farragut's operations in the lower waters, gave the North the line of the Mississippi. It was Grant's greatest military triumph and a very fine achievement, and it will always remain an admirable example of that most interesting manœuvre when a general cuts himself loose from his base — a movement which Sherman made later in his great March to the Sea. Once the line of the Mississippi was won and Grant was in supreme command, the strategic plan of the North was simplified. The policy of pressing in the sides of the quadrilateral began. Sherman cut the Confederacy in two by marching across Georgia from Atlanta to Savannah, and the war zone was thereby narrowed to Virginia and the Carolinas. Grant with the Army of the Potomac advanced against Richmond. He fought his

way southward, till he ultimately forced Lee behind the lines of Petersburg. There began that war of entrenchment with which for four years we ourselves were only too familiar.

Now mark the situation. The South had been blockaded for more than three years. Her troops were ragged and barefoot, with scanty food, scanty munitions, scanty anæsthetics. But they did not give in. Grant did not underrate his enemy. He knew that he could not starve him into surrender, but must beat him in the field. He used all his cards for the purpose and not merely a few. For example, he used the command of the sea. With its assistance in the 1864 campaign he shifted his base and line of communications no less than four times within two months. By the end of March, 1865, he had so weakened the enemy's man-power that he forced him to evacuate Petersburg. Lee broke loose, but

he could not escape. The net had closed round him, and on April 9, 1865, the greatest soldier since Napoleon, commanding an army which was reduced to little more than a corps, laid down his arms at Appomattox.

The North had ended the war in the only way by which the Union could be safeguarded; she had won a complete and final victory. She had found the right answer to her three problems as the Allies found the same answer to the same problems in 1918. She had summoned the whole of her available man-power to arms, using for the purpose the legal imperative, and she had learned how to train them so that the initiative of the volunteer was preserved under the discipline of the corporate unit. She had used her navy to hem in the enemy and to starve and cripple that enemy. She had found men to lead her armies who could get the full value out of her greater

numbers and better equipment. She had found the right strategical plan and in the end had stuck to it, discarding brilliant side-shows. And when all this had been done she had delivered hammer-blow after hammer-blow till the armed might of the South crumbled in the field.

III

Such is the brief survey of a great struggle of ideals and of heroic men. In that war, fought by your grandfathers, there were nearly all the features of the war of six years ago, in which your fathers and your elder brothers fought and the young men whose names are inscribed on your memorial. If I were talking to a professional audience I could enlarge upon the technical matters in which the earlier contest anticipated the later. You will find the whole philosophy of trench warfare foreshadowed in the struggles in the Wilder-

ness of Virginia. You will find the whole use of cavalry as mounted infantry foreseen. You will find many of our modern weapons of war originating in that four-years campaign. You will find the minor tactics on both sides curiously like those of to-day. But I would direct your attention especially to those greater points of resemblance, which vindicate in the most dramatic form the continuity of human history. You begin with a profound spiritual conflict and a fateful decision. You have at the start quantity opposed to quality, undisciplined numbers and undirected wealth to smaller but more expert and compact numbers. You have the slow process by which potential strength is made actual, by which the true plan of war is discovered, and the right man to apply it. And, in both cases, at the end you have no easy victory, but that stark contest of human endurance which alone can decide an issue to which men have pledged their souls.

There is, too, a wider philosophic interest common to both wars. Fundamentally America had to fight the battle which all democracies have to face. Democracy as a form of government is subject to a perpetual challenge, not from foreign enemies alone, but from foes in its own household. Liberty demands a close and unremitting guardianship. The leaders of a democracy must be prepared to do battle with false causes which profess to fight under the democratic banner. They must be prepared to speak the truth unflinchingly to their peoples, and shun that shallow sentiment and confidence in loud formulas which is their special temptation. They must be ready to make decisions far more difficult than any which can confront an oligarchy or a tyrant. They must be willing for the sake of true liberty to wage war upon license. America faced the ordeal, and because she faced it manfully and

clear-sightedly she emerged triumphant. It is an ordeal with which at any time the world may be again confronted. If it should be our fate to meet anew that fiery trial, may God send us the same clearness of vision and stalwartness of purpose.

Gentlemen, the day of wars may be over and our military textbooks may forever gather dust on the top shelves. But the interest of war cannot cease, for with all its cruelty and futility it has a power of raising men to their highest and exhibiting human nature at its greatest. The Civil War will remain to most of us a perpetual fascination because of the moral and intellectual elevation of its leaders. It produced two men of the very first order. On the losing side stands Lee, one of the foremost of the world's soldiers. Those of you who study his campaigns will find that the more they read themselves into his mind, the more they will marvel at its supremacy.

As a man he had an antique grandeur of character. You remember what Bossuet said of Turenne, that he 'could fight without anger, win without ambition, and triumph without vanity.' That might be Lee's epitaph, and I would add to it that he could lose without bitterness. History has few nobler pictures to present than Lee in the closing days of the war, fighting a hopeless battle with gentleness and chivalry, and lifting his broken troops to superhuman heights of achievement. I would set beside that the picture of the old man in his last years in the seclusion of a college presidency, striving by every counsel of wisdom and toleration to heal the wounds of his land.

The other great figure is Lincoln. That rugged face has become one of the two or three best known in the world. He has already passed into legend, and a figure has been constructed in men's minds, a

gentle, humorous, patient, sentimental figure, which scarcely does justice to the great original. What I want to impress upon you about Lincoln is his tremendous *greatness*. Alone he took decisions which have altered the course of the world. When I study his career, behind all the lovable, quaint and often grotesque characteristics, what strikes me most is his immense and lonely sublimity. There is a story told by John Hay of how after his death at some negro revival-meeting in the South the audience was moved to a strange exaltation and men called for visions of prophets and apostles. One young man asked to see Lincoln, and an old negro rose and rebuked him. 'No man see Linkum,' he said. 'Linkum walk as Jesus walk. No man see Linkum.' On this I would make the comment which a great historian has made on a still greater figure:

If the poet is right

'And earthly power doth then show likest God's
When Mercy seasons justice,'

then the apotheosis of Lincoln would not be the most extravagant freak of superstition.

To me he seems one of the two or three greatest men ever born of our blood. You will observe that I am talking as if we were one household and speaking of *our* blood, for no drop ran in his veins which was not British in its ultimate origin. I like to think that in him we see at its highest that kind of character and mind which is the special glory of our common race. He was wholly simple, without vanity or grandiosity or cant. He was a homely man, full of homely commonsense and homely humour, but in the great moment he could rise to a grandeur which is forever denied to posturing, self-conscious talent. He conducted the ordinary business of life in phrases of a homespun simplicity, but when

necessary he could attain to a nobility of speech and a profundity of thought which have rarely been equalled. He was a plain man, loving his fellows and happy among them, but when the crisis came he could stand alone. He could talk with crowds and keep his virtue; he could preserve the common touch and yet walk with God. There is no such bond between peoples as that each should enter into the sacred places of the other, and in the noble merchantry of civilisation let us remember that, if we of England have given Shakespeare to America, you have paid us back with Lincoln.

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